

February 4, 2008

**OBEY SAYS CONGRESS IS WORKING TO CHANGE
"WHO'S FIRST On THE TRAIN AND WHO'S STUCK IN THE CABOOSE";**

WAUSAU, WI - To those who say there isn't a dime's worth of difference between the two political parties, Seventh District Congressman Dave Obey (D-WI) says you're absolutely right . . . there's a \$40 billion difference.

"That's how much we moved out of low priority programs in the President's budget into initiatives that are more important for working families - like medical research, education, and access to health care - when you take into account what we did in January to wrap up the work the last Congress left on the table and what we did in this year's budget," Obey told the crowd gathered at the old Aging and Disability Resources Center today for one of the twenty stops he is making across the 7th District. "It's not as much as I'd like, but it certainly is worth the fight. So I think it's clear there's a very big difference between a Congress run by our friends on the other side of the aisle and a Congress run by the now-majority Democratic Party."

Obey said the public sent two messages with the last election: 1) that we need a change of direction on the war, and 2) that we need a change in domestic policies. "But the President stiffed us on both," Obey added.

On the war, Obey said "We've tried every way known to man to bring this war to a conclusion. The House passed two bills - both of which I sponsored - that would have required a change in direction in Iraq. The President vetoed one and used his friends in the Senate to block the other."

On the domestic front, "The President asked for \$200 billion more for Iraq and another \$50 billion for tax cuts for folks making over a million bucks a year, but he wanted to cut \$16 billion out of crucial funding for things like student aid, cancer research, rural health care, and clean water funding," Obey said. "We rejected those cuts and instead provided, over the President's objection, more than \$7 billion in additional funds for veterans' healthcare - our top priority.

If the President can ask for \$200 billion for the war in Iraq, we felt an obligation to do much more to help those military families who suffered the most because of that war. We also provided over \$600 million more than the President wanted to study diseases like Alzheimer's, cancer, Parkinson's and diabetes. We provided funding to allow Community Health Centers to serve 280,000 more underinsured Americans and High Risk Insurance Pools to help 200,000 more people afford health insurance. We expanded Pell Grants for hundreds of thousands of working class students. And we blocked more than a billion dollars in Presidential cuts to state and local law enforcement funding and beefed up funding for border security."

"All of these hard fought changes were badly needed, but they are still not enough to meet the needs of a growing and changing society. Despite the fact that appropriation bills passed the Congress on a bipartisan basis with almost 50 Republicans on average supporting us on making those changes, the President used his veto and Senate filibusters to block the even greater changes that are needed," Obey added. "We fought for these changes because the most well off one percent of all citizens have hugely increased their share of the nations' wealth and income in recent years at the expense of working families who are being squeezed more and more in their ability to afford education, health care, and other necessities of family life. Their economic security is being squeezed every day and it's time Washington recognizes that fact."

"The budget battle with the President this past year makes quite clear that the nation is highly unlikely to get the changes we need without more progressive voices in the U.S. Senate and a President who is determined to fight for, rather than block, those changes," Obey concluded.

#